I: Good evening and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I will also need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols in the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you and you can leave at any time. I would like to ask your consent to record this conversation as it would make it easier for me to analyze the data later and I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R7: Yes.

I: Perfect. So this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again rest assured that the contents of the interview are non-anonymous and used only for my thesis paper. Do you have any questions before we start?

R7: No.

I: Perfect. So the first question is how would you personally define sustainability?

R7: I think sustainability is mostly about trying to use different products and our resources as humanely long-term as possible, making sure that they don't contribute to the overall degeneration of our planet and in general just being conscious about what we're doing in our actions.

I: So to what extent would you say that you're concerned about environmental issues and are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R7: I think to a pretty large extent especially with the kind of state of the world right now I think it's really important to be conscious about environmental issues especially because I mean we're trying to live on this planet for a longer time. In terms of my daily routine I tried to do the little things at least like recycling and trying to be careful, use public transportation, make sure I'm not contributing too much to pollution but obviously it is kind of difficult in terms of every part of life and my routine.

I: And what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? What do you pay attention to for example are there any colors, packaging materials, any visuals or anything that you care about?

R7: I think it depends so depending on the product my answer might change if the product is better suited for plastic I have to buy that but if I can try to buy things that are not plastic and maybe like glass or things that are better for the environment I'll try to do that but it also depends on price. I think packaging is also pretty important because obviously most people are

gonna go for the aesthetically pleasing packages and then in terms of like colors I'm not really that picky I think it again just depends on the type of product I am buying.

I: Okay what kind of packaged goods do you buy so can you give me examples of packaged goods that you may have bought recently like at the grocery store or something?

R7: Yeah recently I stocked up on a bunch of groceries so I bought like...

I: Oh one second. Sorry you're just cut up there can you repeat that?

R7: Yeah I just went grocery shopping so I bought like milk, bread, yogurt, I think some sort of sauce probably and then like granola bars.

I: Okay and among the products that you've just mentioned did you notice if any of them were sustainable products?

R7: I don't think they're technically sustainable products. I mean at least with like the bars and stuff I can at least put a recycling bin just because it's a cardboard box but the rest of it weren't really.

I: One second you're breaking up again. One sec. I'm gonna try to change the connection.

I: Okay, so how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? So what criteria would you use if you saw a product in a grocery store to determine if it was sustainable or not?

R7: I think I would start off with the packaging seeing if either it's recyclable or even if it's reusable so a lot of the times when I'm using things like pasta jars or plastic containers. I'll try to wash them and you've reused them like leftovers and stuff like that. Just so it's a little bit less harmful to the planet. I also think about just looking at the material and then what's inside. So I think whatever is being made for that product like for example if certain things I know like our stores or even medicine or skincare if I know that product that's being used inside is a little bit more helpful and harmful to the environment. I'll try not to buy

I: Okay, do you have any examples of those kinds of products?

R7: I'm trying to think I know that certain things like hair oils and then conditioners and stuff also have products like their ingredients aren't the best, so I'll try to avoid that. And then it just really depends. So then there's also things like if I've heard that for face wash the little beads inside they're not like they can't degenerate in water, I'll try not to buy those products because I know that it's just gonna go to waste in the sink.

I: Gotcha and my last open-ended question is what elements of a product make you think it's eco friendlier than others, regardless of whether you buy it or not. So are there any, if you see a

product in a store, are there any colors or materials that make you think that something is eco friendlier?

R7: I mean definitely in green I think is associated a lot with eco-friendly products. Obviously, that's not always the case, but most of the time if you see like a green product your brain kind of automatically thinks like “oh this might be a little bit better.” I think a lot of the products here sometimes have like a green leaf or something of that nature to show that like it's a part of an organization that might be more earth-friendly. And then I think also just seeing if a product has like the recyclables and the recycle symbol or anything like that. Also shows a little bit more eco-friendly just because it's not gonna be able to go straight to the trash, you can recycle it and use it again.

I: Perfect. Okay, so now I'm going to share my screen and show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods and what you need to do is classify each of them on which of the three you think is the most sustainable and I asked you to explain why you feel that way about each of the products. So I'm gonna share my screen. Okay, so can you see my screen right now?

R7: Yes.

I: Okay. I'm gonna make it a little bigger so the images are a little clearer. Okay, so the first group is the same brand and product just packaged in different materials. So out of these three, which one would you think is the most sustainable?

R7: I would assume probably the one on the left so the glass bottle just because I know that you can recycle glass, and then also just in terms of like the glass bottle itself personally for me I would be able to reuse that for other sauces and stuff. With like the middle one, that's plastic so it's gonna go straight into the trash afterwards and you can't really reuse it, and then for the right one, that would probably be my middle sustainable one, but it's just because like at least I know with top parts of cans you have to throw that away and it's probably still as sustainable as a glass bottle. But in my head, I would just say the glass one.

I: Perfect. And then what about these three?

R7: So with these three I would probably say like the middle one [metal can] just because I know the entire part of that can can go into the recycling bin. With the left one [glass bottle], you might have to throw away the cap. And then with the right one, obviously another plastic bottle. So that's not always the most sustainable product, so I would say the middle one.

I: Okay, And then what about these three?

R7: I would say probably the right one similar to the other two kind of ideas again, I think glass bottles are pretty sustainable better for the environment. The two on the left are both plastic bottles and you're not gonna really be able to do a lot with them, especially the middle one.

That's gonna have to kind of be thrown away as soon as it's used and the one on the left. I mean, I think you can recycle her but I'm not even 100% sure about that.

I: Okay, so the second group is same packaging material but different brands. So out of these three same question, which one do you think is the most sustainable and why?

R7: I would say the one on the very left [Noosa] just because I've bought those types of things before and I've been able to reuse them because it's like a proper top. With the other two you would have to immediately throw it out just because it's a lid that you just peel off, and so you wouldn't really be able to keep reusing those.

I: Perfect, out of these three?

R7: Not 100% sure, I guess I would say maybe the one on the right just because the packaging looks a little bit more clean. But in all fairness, they kind of all look the same.

I: Okay, how about these three?

R7: Um, I would probably say the one on the left [Land O'Lakes] just because I know that's like a cardboard material kind of I guess best way to describe it so I know you can like put that into the recycling bin and then with the one on like the middle and then I'm not sure about the one on the right, but with both of those the butters immediately inside so you have to throw like that immediately away after.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R7: I would say the middle one [Bonne Maman] just because I know that it's like glass and even though the one on the right is definitely glass [Welch's]. I'm sure one about the left [Smuckers], but I know that the middle one has pretty good ingredients as well. I'd be a little bit more nervous to buy the other two just because of the ingredients and they might not have the best interest for the environment in terms of how they process everything.

I: And then out of these three?

R7: I think, I mean the output would be the same for those three, but I think maybe the one on the right [Club Crackers] I would say would be the most sustainable just simply because it's green. I mean, obviously that's probably not the case that it's very similar especially in terms of what's inside but yeah.

I: Perfect and then out of these three?

R7: Um, I would say maybe the one on the right [Seventh Generation] and they seem to be made of similar material, but at least with the one on the right. It seems like a really cohesive,

simple design and I think with that company, they're known to have a little bit of better ingredients and stuff. So potentially they might be better in terms of sustainability.

I: And then the last group is different brands and different packaging materials so out of these three?

R7: Out of these, I would say the one on the left [On The Border] because it's again glass and reusable in terms of after. This also is even done with the middle and the right one, right when you might be able to like kind of reuse but sometimes plastic is not always the best case to do that. So yeah.

I: These three?

R7: And again, I would either say the one on the left [Quaker] is probably better to the one on the left because you can put that definitely into a recycling bin since it's cardboard. With the middle one [Honey Bunches of Oats], that's plastic it might not be able to recycle it. And then with the right one [Sunbest Natural], that's entirely like plastic so that might not be the best material.

I: Then out of these three?

R7: And I would probably say the middle one [Horizon Organic] just because it looks like that would probably be recyclable. I haven't really used any of these products, but that would be my best guess. I'm sure maybe all of them technically could be recycled, but you can't really reuse it.

I: And I think this is the last one out of these three?

R7: I would say maybe the middle one [Rise] since it's a metal container and every part of the metal container can basically be compacted and used again in terms of the recycling plant. At least with the other two you might have to throw away the lid or you're gonna have to throw away the outside packaging in order for it to be recycled.

I: Perfect. So I think that's the last so I'm just gonna stop sharing and I just have one last follow-up question after seeing those pictures. Okay, so after seeing all these pictures,did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands that we've reviewed today in case you're not familiar with greenwashing? It's defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact. So did you think that any of the brands seem to be kind of intentionally trying to mislead consumers about their environmental impact?

R7: I mean, just from just the packaging and stuff I'm not 100% sure if they're consciously doing it. Obviously a lot of brands will use color schemes and fonts and simplistic material to kind of seem as if they're saving the environment when they're actually harming it more and I'm sure

some of these brands are doing exactly that. So I can't give specific examples, but I'm sure with a little bit of research you would definitely be able to see that a lot of these companies aren't making the impact that they're trying to pretend they are. I think also some brands should advertise more about how they're helping their environment, just so that more people are willing to buy it even if their products are a little bit more expensive.

I: Perfect. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate your help!